

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, today we have the opportunity to explain to my colleagues some legislation that we introduced earlier today. It builds on legislation which we introduced in the last Congress. It is called the Hoekstra-Hutchinson Voice on Term Limits. It is the Term Limits Act of 1995.

What this legislation does, it provides for a nonbinding national advisory referendum on congressional term limits during the November 1996 general election. As this legislation moves through the House and the Senate, this legislation would provide the first time in the history of this country where the American people would actually have the opportunity to advise Congress on a particular issue.

As the Members of this body are well aware, we had a vote earlier this year on term limits. While we did win a majority, we did not receive the necessary number of votes to move this legislation through the House and to the Senate and move it to the American people and to the States for its confirmation as an amendment to the Constitution.

What we are proposing with this legislation is enhancing the process and allowing the American people the opportunity to influence this Congress.

The process would work in this way: During the spring, summer, and early fall of 1996, we would envision a national debate on the pros and cons of term limits. Then in November of 1996, on every ballot across this country, there would be a very simple question: Should Congress approve a constitutional amendment to limit the number of terms that a Member of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate can serve in their office? Yes or no?

As the results from this national referendum would be tabulated and reported, the next Congress would come back in January of 1997. A commitment has been made that as Republicans would still maintain the majority in the House, that the first piece of legislation that we would consider would be another vote on term limits. So we would see an opportunity to have a national debate, a national referendum, and then a vote on term limits.

Really, what we are talking about is what I think this institution needs, is we need more direct input from the American people advising and influencing and providing an opportunity to set the agenda here in Washington. It is an experimental process. It is an experimental process providing an opportunity to enable the American people to set the agenda, help set the agenda in Washington and more clearly advise this House on the type of direction that we should take.

This piece of legislation is part of a broader package of bills that I introduced today which also includes the opportunity for Members or for citizens to recall Members of the House and of the Senate, providing for the inclusion of "none of the above" on ballots around the country, and also providing

legislation to provide binding initiative and referendum.

The bill that I am talking about today, the National Voice on Term Limits, is only an advisory referendum. It is an experiment in improving democracy, and I am excited to begin this process and to move this legislation through the House of Representatives.

#### MEDICARE: A CONTRACT WITH OUR SENIOR CITIZENS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KIM). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago a contract with our senior citizens was created when the Medicare program was enacted, and now the Republican Congress is proposing to end Medicare as we know it and balance the budget. I am afraid, on the backs of senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican Party was against Medicare when it was enacted in 1965, and now that Republicans have regained control of Congress, one of the first things that they want to do is take \$270 billion out of the program and for senior citizens to foot the bill for a balanced budget. While I believe in a balanced budget, I feel the Republican approach is incorrect, wrong and draconian.

Medicare has had a lot of success since it was established. Poverty rates for senior citizens have declined dramatically. Medicare has given seniors universal health coverage and protected them from depleting their hard-earned resources. Without Medicare, many seniors would be forced to choose between health care, food, and shelter.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read an excerpt from testimony submitted to Congress during the Medicare debate from a concerned citizen in 1963. It is from the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD: "My mother is now 85 years old, and since she has been hospitalized before, the insurance company cancelled out her policy, and now I am paying the bill. Her sole income is a social security check for \$40 a month. I hope my children will not have the same choice to make to either pay the bills or put dad on relief." That is from the RECORD on November 21, 1963.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Republicans have not discussed the specific details of how they plan to change Medicare, because they are afraid to tell seniors what will happen with this \$270 billion in Medicare cuts.

One plan, though, that the Republicans are floating is a voucher plan, which basically limits the health care coverage of senior citizens. This voucher plan would basically give seniors substandard health care unless they have a lot of money and can afford their own health coverage. Essentially, a senior will be told that once he has used up the voucher, that he will have to pay for health care insurance out of

his own pocket, and I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, the Republicans do not realize that most seniors are on a fixed income and simply will not be able to afford the extra cost that will be entailed under this proposed voucher program.

There are other Republican plans that have been discussed that will either force senior citizens into HMO's or the managed care systems that are like HMO's, and essentially what that does is to tell the seniors which doctors they can and they cannot see.

I have talked to a lot of senior citizens over the last few months about some of these alternate plans that Republicans have come up with, and most of the senior citizens I represent are very happy with their doctors and do not want to be told which doctors that are going to serve them. They are very afraid of the fact they will not be able to choose their own doctor.

Nobody really knows exactly what the Republicans are going to do, because they have not put specific proposals forward.

But their proposed Medicare cuts are so large, I am convinced it is only going to hurt senior citizens. I am afraid the Republicans will end Medicare as we know it, without telling the American public the true story of what these \$270 billion in cuts are ultimately going to mean to them.

Some estimates figure that seniors will have an additional \$1,000 per month of out-of-pocket costs to maintain the same health coverage that they are currently receiving, and if health costs rise faster than the growth in Medicare to seniors, then seniors are either going to get less services or pay more money. It is that simple.

Mr. Speaker, finally, during the last few nights, I have heard Republicans state that they are really concerned about saving Medicare and that is why they are putting forth these cuts in the program and the changes that we are hearing about. But I would maintain that if Republicans are truly concerned about saving Medicare and reforming it, then they should not be approaching it in the backward way that they are approaching it. Republicans are starting with \$270 billion in cuts, the largest amount of cuts in the history of the Medicare program. Then, after they make these cuts, they want to gut Medicare to achieve the cost savings.

The American public should not be fooled by these Republican plans. Senior citizens should watch closely over the next few months to see what the Republicans do to the existing Medicare program, and the Republicans should not be allowed to break Medicare's contract with America's seniors.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CHRYSLER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. CHRYSLER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]